

MODEST MAKEOVER

BY JOETTA MOULDEN • PHOTOGRAPHY BY JANET LENZEN

As devoted *Houston House & Home* readers, Tory Schmitz and Mike Dingus first contacted me because they desired a living room makeover. After two successful collaborations on the couple's living and dining rooms, they called me back because they wanted guidance remodeling their master bath.

**OUTDATED
MASTER BATH
TURNS SLEEK WITH
ADDED SPACE,
LIGHT AND
ACCESSIBILITY**



AFTER



BEFORE

BEFORE: A pointless furdrown over the sink, dated sliding cabinet, Hollywood light, wall mirror and low, tiled vanity left much to be desired.

AFTER: Removing the furdrown visually raised the ceiling, allowing room for a large mirror and new lighting over the sink. A new pedestal sink and movable storage cabinets contribute to the spacious feeling.

Since their children are older now and they plan to sell their house in a couple of years, they wanted to be able to savor the changes for a while, instead of fixing the bath for someone else to enjoy.

SMALL SPACE, BIG PROBLEMS

The house built in 1964 featured a teeny, dated master bathroom with a low, tiled vanity, narrow linen cabinet and built-in clothes hamper behind the narrow doorway. The shelves were very shallow and so high they were awkward to use. Behind the toilet was an odd, staggered wall, and the tile in the shower was quite unattractive. But what bothered me almost as much as those things were the very narrow 23-inch doorways, one from the hallway, the other from the master bedroom. These were some of the irritating, daily problems to solve.

TIP: Widening or removing narrow doorways not only ensures maximum square footage in the bath, but just makes it easier to move around.

“We wanted anyone who came to our house to say, ‘Wow,’ whether they were coming for a visit or coming as potential buyers,” Tory explains.

TIME FOR CHANGE

I offered some preliminary suggestions, such as removing the narrow space-gobbling louvered swing doors between the awkward toilet area and incorporating that square footage into the bath. They needed to remove the low vanity, sliding wall storage cabinet and its dated Hollywood light strip and wall mirror with rosettes. And I suggested the furdawn over the sink vanity also be eliminated. For some reason, builders in this era installed sink furdowns, but they seldom housed ductwork or anything important. They just date the bathroom and visually lower the ceiling, thus making a small room seem even smaller.

Removing the dated wainscot wall tile, smoothing out the staggered wall behind the toilet and painting the bath the same color as the master bedroom, C2 Paint’s “Haddon Hall,” simplified the space and brought the room into this century.



DIY DECORATING



BEFORE:
A narrow showerhead and dusty pink and cocoa-speckled tile not only darkened the tub area, but offered no luxury whatsoever.

AFTER: A new showerhead, overhead light and sparkling white tile brighten the tub area.



BEFORE

AFTER

TRADE SECRETS

- Unify en suite rooms with the same paint colors, window treatments, fabrics and accessory themes.
- To save money, keep the toilet and tub/shower in their original locations. Moving large fixtures and their drains can result in unexpected, large plumbing costs. Moving vanity sinks further down the same wall is far less troublesome and costly.
- Keep hardware consistent. Make a commitment to either cool metals or warm metals. Do not mix both in same room.
- Sometimes the most effective plan is to not gut your bathroom without first having a professional plan in place that offers great-looking, cost-saving features.

TIP: In an en suite master bedroom and bath, painting both rooms the same color enlarges the space and creates visual autonomy between the two rooms.

LET'S GO SHOPPING

Before they bought one fixture, I sent Tory and Mike off to The Great Indoors, Lowe's and The Home Depot to research bath vignettes they liked and to study new plumbing fixtures, bath storage options, lighting and tile flooring. "You told me you thought we could remodel the space for \$10,000 to \$11,000," Tory says. "We actually completed the project for about \$8,000, partly because we did the painting ourselves and opted for a shower curtain, instead of a rimless glass shower enclosure.

"Additionally, your list of specific tasks helped us make our own 'to-do' and 'to-buy' lists. I never realized how many details there are and how many decisions there are to make in a remodeling like this."

TIP: Before beginning a bath remodel, have a professional plan in place. This will save a lot of money and heartache and keep your project on track.

The couple opted to replace the bathtub with a new, lower cast-iron model that was easier to step in and out of, rather than having the porcelain refinished on their old tub. They selected white, 4-by-4-inch glazed wall tile from Master Tile for the tub walls.

Bringing the plumbing up to code, they chose a Moen posi-pressure, posi-temp fixture and purchased the Kohler pedestal sink, Kohler chrome faucet and towel bars online from www.faucets.com. The hexagonal floor tile came from Daltile. The electrical was brought up to code with GFCI receptacles and an exhaust fan.



AFTER



BEFORE: An odd, staggered tile wall behind the toilet made the bath feel off balance and served no purpose.

AFTER: Smoothing out the staggered tile behind the toilet and adding storage simplified the bathroom considerably.

THE DRAMATIC DOOR EFFECT

Tory admits that widening the two outer bathroom doorways was hardest to visualize. "We never would have considered enlarging the 23-inch doorways to 32 inches, so it was difficult to envision the dramatic effect your suggestion would have," Tory explains. They also had to trust that a pedestal sink would visually enlarge the space, but worried where they would store their "stuff." The couple realized that extra tubes of toothpaste, shampoo and other supplies they don't use daily could be stored in plastic shoe boxes in the nearby study closet.

PICTURE PERFECT

Tory and Mike, who are terrific comparison shoppers, found the best prices for the mirror and hotel-style shower curtain at Target, the storage cabinet over the toilet from Ikea and his-and-her storage cabinets from The Home Depot flanking the pedestal sink. The light fixture was purchased on sale from Lighting Inc.

After Tory e-mailed an in-progress photo of the wall above the toilet, I suggested she consider white floating wall shelves from west elm to add display space and fill in the blank wall space under the wall-hung storage cabinet.

TIP: Snapping photographs as you move through a remodeling is a good way to check your progress and see where blank spaces are on walls.

The new room looks bright, spacious, classy and unique and showcases the couple's antique bottle collection. They have learned so much, like the importance of clear communication with your contractor and careful measuring before you buy.

And what do friends and family think of the makeover? "We have had friends over for 'tours' and they say what I hoped they would: 'Wow!'" Tory says with a smile.

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